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The Meaning of State Supervision in the Social Protection of Children

By

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CONTENTS

	Page
Foreword	1
Organization of supervisory services	3
Plan of organization	3
Qualifications of personnel	4
Cooperative relationships	5
Supervision of child-welfare agencies	7
Starting a new program	7
Services to agencies	8
Frequency and character of visits	8
Services to the governing boards	11
Services to the staff	12
Special services	13
Group meetings	14
Standards of care and service	15
The use of a license	17
Supervision of care given in foster homes	19
Licensing of family homes	19
Problems of independent placements	21

The Meaning of State Supervision in the Social Protection of Children

FOREWORD

There is wide variation in different States in the scope of State supervisory service for the social protection of children. In various combinations such service may include supervision or advisory service to State institutions caring for children, supervision and licensing of private child-welfare agencies, supervision or supervision and licensing of local public child-welfare agencies, supervision of social practices in maternity hospitals, licensing of foster homes, social investigation of adoption cases, supervision of interstate placement, and supervision of juvenile probation. All these forms of agency service for children, public or private, are closely interrelated, and only through a coordinated plan of supervisory service is it possible to achieve development in standards of child care.

Although in a number of States some of these types of supervisory service have been placed in other State agencies, there is evidence of a trend in administrative practice and legislation toward concentration of supervision of the social aspects of child care in the welfare department. The development of cooperative relationships through which advisory services are given by the child-welfare division of the State welfare department to State institutions caring for dependent and delinquent children is one illustration of this trend. The need for safeguarding the child born out of wedlock was the basis of early legislation placing the licensing of maternity hospitals in the State welfare department. With the growth of understanding of the need for assuring adequate medical and nursing care for all maternity patients, the newer legislation on this subject provides for licensing by the State health department in cooperation with the State welfare department, which is responsible for supervision of the social practices of the hospitals. The steadily increasing participation of State welfare departments in safeguarding adoption through arranging for social investigations is also significant. At present more than a third of the States have enacted legislation to this effect. In many rural areas throughout the country the child-welfare workers of the local public-welfare departments are assisting the juvenile court in its probation service and have demonstrated the close relationship that should exist between a welfare department and the juvenile court.

The following presentation of principles and procedures of State supervision is limited to the two forms of supervision that almost universally have been made the responsibility of State welfare departments—supervision of child-welfare agencies and of foster homes caring for children. The term child-welfare agency is used as a

generic term, including all types of private and local public agencies caring for children who for any reason need special services or care in institutions, foster homes, day nurseries, or their own homes.

This brief pamphlet on State supervision does not attempt to present a comprehensive discussion of the problems involved in a supervisory program but rather calls attention to some of the basic principles involved in the supervisory process. It was written in response to numerous requests for material on State supervision which the Children's Bureau has received during the last few years, when supervisory services in the various States have been in the process of development and expansion. It is based on visits made to 10 States—Alabama, Connecticut, Georgia, Illinois, Indiana, Maryland, Minnesota, New Jersey, North Carolina, and Wisconsin. These States were selected because they represented a wide geographical area, different types of legislative authority, and difference in the extent of time during which the program had been in operation. No effort has been made to describe the program in any one of these States, but the experience of all has been used.

From the outset it is recognized that it is not possible to suggest any one way in which to develop a supervisory program that will be applicable and useful to all the States. It is clear, however, that there are philosophies, policies, and general procedures which are basic to an effective program of supervision in any State.

The primary objective of State supervision is to furnish helpful services to agencies by making available information on progressive methods of child care and by offering consultation on various aspects of agency programs. Not only should the State welfare department be helpful in matters pertaining to the operation of an agency but it should also further constructive programs on such problems as adoption, the unmarried mother and her child, the physically or mentally handicapped child, and the child with serious behavior problems. The State department should likewise be in a position to give advisory services on community planning by assisting in developing new services or modifying old programs to meet changing needs.

ORGANIZATION OF SUPERVISORY SERVICES

PLAN OF ORGANIZATION

It is generally agreed that the supervision of private and local public child-welfare agencies and of family homes caring for children should be the responsibility of the division of the State welfare department concerned with the welfare of children. This makes possible a close coordination of local public and private services for children, more complete information on the available resources for their care and those that are lacking, and a unified approach toward the development of new services. Furthermore, since the children's division is concerned with the problems of children, there is assurance that the special skills acquired by training and experience in the child-welfare field will be considered essential in the appointment of personnel for supervisory services.

The plan of organization within a division of child welfare will depend upon the scope of supervisory services for which the division has responsibility. Another factor influencing the plan is the type of child-welfare agencies in the State and the number and distribution of these agencies. A State in which the child-welfare agencies consist of a few private agencies and many county departments providing child-welfare services presents quite a different problem from a State with more than 100 private agencies largely concentrated in urban areas, a number of local public institutions, and county departments undertaking foster-family care.

The essential features of any plan of organization of supervisory services are that expert services should be available for all types of agencies and that provision be made for a unified approach to the problem of supervision so that there is a conscious and progressive development in the program which cannot be achieved when staff members with varied activities must undertake the guidance of agencies as a side issue. An essential factor in a constructive approach to the problem, where there are many and varied types of child-welfare agencies needing services, is the appointment of a specialist in supervision or the establishment of a supervisory unit. By centering final responsibility for the development of the supervisory program in such a specialist or supervisory unit, the uninterrupted and continuous attention to the needs of child-welfare agencies necessary to an effective program of supervision is made available. Leadership in initiating and developing general educational services for the agencies is also an important responsibility of the specialist in supervision or the supervisory unit.

The number of persons needed in such a supervisory unit will naturally depend upon the size and character of the supervision problem in the State. In States which have relatively few child-welfare agencies, one person may be expected to carry the full respon-

sibility. States with a large number of agencies employ several persons who may have responsibility for all agencies and family homes in a geographical area or for a particular type of work, such as supervision of day nurseries, institutions, or child-placing agencies, social procedures in maternity hospitals, arrangements for investigations in adoption cases, or approval of foster homes for licensing.

It is essential that there be close cooperation between the supervisory unit and the field staff of the department responsible for the development of local public child-welfare services. Increasingly, local public departments are being given responsibility through legislation for providing services and care for children, and in some States local public institutions and departments having an organized service for children, as well as private organizations, must be licensed as child-welfare agencies. Uniform improvement of standard of services of all agencies in the State providing care for children is a joint responsibility of the field staff engaged in establishing, strengthening, and developing local public child-welfare services and of the supervisory staff working with private agencies. The plan used in most States of placing these two services in a children's division furthers close cooperation between the two units.

The field staff responsible for the development of local public child-welfare services can make a significant contribution in promoting community planning in the areas that they are serving and in coordinating the services of the established private agencies and the newer public agencies serving children. Such service is particularly needed in States in which there has existed for many years a program of care for children at public expense by private institutions and agencies. Unless an adequate staff is provided in the supervisory unit, it may be necessary to enlist the assistance of the field staff in making special studies of agencies or in providing, in cooperation with local child-welfare workers, services for certain agencies, such as investigations for admission or discharge of children from an institution, or providing case-work service for a short period as a demonstration.

The State supervisory unit also needs assistance in such supervisory services as making investigations in adoption cases or investigating, recommending for licensing, and supervising foster homes in which children are placed without the assistance of an agency. Because of the nature of these services and, in the case of adoption investigations, the need for cooperation with the local court, it is desirable to have these activities undertaken by local public or private child-welfare workers. The function of the State in these services is to issue the licenses for foster homes and to review and approve reports to the courts on adoption investigations.

QUALIFICATIONS OF PERSONNEL

Since the success of State supervision as a helpful service to agencies depends upon the quality of personnel selected to develop the program, the State department should carefully consider the qualifications of persons chosen to be responsible for this important State service to children. The salaries available for personnel supervising child-welfare agencies should be sufficient to interest well-equipped persons and should be comparable to salaries paid for other important positions in the department.

Basic knowledge of social work gained through professional education and broad experience is an essential qualification for persons engaged in a supervisory program. It is desirable that the experience of such persons include work with public and private agencies rendering different types of services for children. They should be acquainted with general principles of child placing and institutional care and should be able to furnish leadership in the development of services to children. Although knowledge of particular problems, such as institutional management, nutrition, and public health, may be useful, it is obviously impossible to find persons who have the social-work experience and who also are proficient in all the problems with which child-welfare agencies are concerned. An important qualification to offset such deficiency of knowledge is the ability to utilize available resources and the skills of others in regard to special problems.

Equally important are personal qualifications. Persons supervising child-welfare agencies should have good educational and cultural backgrounds and the broad individual interests which make for good adjustment. Maturity characterized by sound judgment is a desirable qualification. If satisfactory relationships between the State welfare department and the agencies are to be developed, a fundamental liking for people and an ability to develop good working relationships are essential. Other qualities necessary to insure the development of full potentialities in the supervisory program are executive ability and initiative. Imagination, perspective, and vision are also highly desirable.

COOPERATIVE RELATIONSHIPS

The State welfare department should develop cooperative relationships with other public departments and organizations whose services may be useful in promoting better standards of work in child-welfare agencies. The cooperation of the State health department may be especially helpful in formulating health standards for children's agencies and family homes and in giving advice in regard to health and medical services needed for children. Obtaining the cooperation of the local health authorities in inspecting the sanitation and housing of institutions is also an important means of insuring adequate health protection.

Another public department with which cooperation should be developed is the office of the fire marshal. Maintenance of fire protection in children's institutions should be of concern to State welfare departments, many of which have found it helpful to have on file a copy of the report of regular inspections of all children's institutions made by the fire marshal. Although follow-up on recommendations is the responsibility of the fire marshal, cooperative action may sometimes achieve results more quickly.

Since councils of social agencies organized in most urban communities maintain an active interest in the work of children's agencies in the community, the State welfare department should seek to cooperate with all such organizations in the State. In a few large cities the interest of the councils of social agencies in children's agencies has been directed through a special child-welfare division, which in

some instances has undertaken special services to individual agencies. In a few councils desirable standards of care and service for children's agencies have been formulated, and often community studies of resources for children are sponsored. By coordinating its work with that of the councils, the State welfare department will increase the effectiveness of its own services.

The need for expert advice and service on nutrition, recreation, vocational guidance, and other similar problems with which children's agencies are concerned makes advantageous the development of cooperative relationships with organizations in the State or local communities competent to give such advice. These organizations may be used in an advisory capacity to the State welfare department, which can in turn advise the agencies on desirable procedures in certain aspects of their program; or the department may be able to develop a plan with certain organizations to give advisory services directly to the child-welfare agencies. Agencies may also be encouraged to develop their own relationships with any local organizations that can be of assistance in regard to particular features of their program.

The need for the services of a psychologist, psychiatrist, or other specialist in an agency may be met through cooperative arrangements developed by the State welfare department with organizations or groups having the services of such specialists. With increasing development of public services in mental hygiene, especially on a State level, there is increased opportunity for making such arrangements. The State welfare department should be alert to possibilities of providing such special services through cooperative arrangements and should likewise encourage the agencies to develop their own relationships with possible services in their community.

SUPERVISION OF CHILD-WELFARE AGENCIES

STARTING A NEW PROGRAM

There is no one procedure or combination of procedures for starting a new program, as procedures effectively used in one State may be totally unsuitable in another where conditions are different. There are, however, some general features which should characterize the procedures of the State department in beginning a supervisory program, as well as some specific methods to which consideration may be given.

Since the supervisory program should be regarded as a cooperative project between the department and the agencies, the foundation for the successful development of State supervision is an understanding relationship between the State welfare department and the child-welfare agencies. The chief objective for the first year or two should be development of such mutual understanding. At the very start of the program the department should undertake to allay any apprehension of agencies that their activities are to be controlled through the program. The agencies should be given an opportunity to become acquainted with the personnel responsible for supervision and should be given an interpretation of the meaning of supervision. Likewise, it is important to study and analyze the problems of each agency and to develop a suitable educational program throughout the State.

The difficulty of breaking down barriers built up through misunderstanding or unpleasant experiences makes it important for the early associations with the agencies to be pleasant and at the same time profitable. The concept of State supervision which many of the agencies have is determined by the attitude of the State worker with whom they are first associated. If the approach of this worker is dominant, superior, and critical, the idea of the supervisory program will be colored by such characteristics and any apprehension which they may have had in regard to the program will be increased. On the other hand, if the attitude of the worker shows she has an understanding of the problems of the agency and can be helpful, the concept of supervision as a cooperative program will be promoted. The acceptance by the agencies of this concept of supervision in the beginning of the program will be a great asset in developing an effective service.

An understanding of the differences in the background, development, and resources of the agencies should be the basis upon which service to each agency is developed.

As a means of getting to know the agencies, the first visits may be made to learn about the organization and to become acquainted with the executive and other staff members. Facts to be obtained during these early visits may be limited to pertinent data which give a general picture of an agency program and which may serve as a basis

for working with the individual agency. An outline may be useful as a guide in gathering such basic information but should not be so strictly adhered to that the freedom of the worker using it will be hampered. Instead of obtaining only general facts as a first procedure in working with individual agencies, a formal study may be made. However, if complete studies, which require considerable time, are made of each agency in the beginning of a program, association with many agencies will be delayed. Further delay would result from giving follow-up services, which should be immediately available if the maximum usefulness is to be realized from such comprehensive studies. Therefore it may be desirable to get acquainted to some extent with the work of all the agencies and to undertake comprehensive studies of only a selected few.

Another device for assembling information on agency programs is a self-study by the agencies. An outline should be available to serve as a guide for preparing information which will be useful to the department and also valuable to the agencies. Visits to the agencies for interpretation of such a plan and also written explanation will be necessary. Assistance in preparing the data should also be available if needed.

Although the process of getting to know the agencies should be emphasized during the early development of the program, consultation and advisory services may also be an important part of the first work with agencies. As the program develops there will be less need to concentrate upon getting acquainted, and more time may be available for services to the agencies.

SERVICES TO AGENCIES

Frequency and character of visits.

No rule can be made regarding the number of visits that should be made to an agency during a year. An annual visit is the minimum generally accepted, but many more visits may be necessary if the agency needs assistance. Since there is a practical limitation of the extent of service which a small State staff can give to a large number of agencies, the department should carefully plan its services to the individual agencies. If the department attempts to spread its services equally to all the agencies, the results may be ineffectual. Continued and follow-up services, until gains and improvements have become stabilized, are highly important, and the absence of such follow-up services may vitiate any gains resulting from previous services. It therefore seems desirable for the State welfare department to formulate a policy concerning the extent of services to be undertaken with individual agencies. A principle which may be helpful is that a minimum amount of service to all agencies is desirable, with concentration of services upon a selected group.

The selection of agencies to which the State department will give more intensive services should be determined partly by the need for such services but should also be influenced by other factors. Since services are more effective if given at a time when especially needed, the department should attempt to fulfill any requests for special aid. Frequently, an emergency in an agency furnishes an excellent opportunity for providing services for which at that par-

ticular time an executive or a governing board may feel real need. The development of a public child-placing program in a community in which only institutional resources have been available may make it desirable to give special services to the institutions in that particular community. Services given to all child-welfare agencies located in one vicinity may also be advisable, since a community approach to agency problems is desirable. Another advantage in the selection of a group of agencies in a community for special services is the saving of time and expense involved in transportation.

In order to conserve time and increase the effectiveness of services to individual agencies, it is desirable that each visit be made for a definite purpose related to the whole plan of work with the particular agency. In preparation for a visit to an agency it is important to review the record of previous visits and any data or records that will bring to light any problems needing consideration, such as interstate placement, frequent replacement of children, or similar situations.

When inspection of the physical plant of an institution is an important procedure of a particular visit, an effort should be made to make the process a constructive one. An unhurried interview with the executive or staff members before and after the tour of buildings and grounds may aid in making such a visit useful to the institution. The reading of social case records of institutions, and especially of child-placing agencies, is a means of obtaining first-hand information on the practices followed in regard to intake, supervision, and discharge of children which is necessary for intelligent consultation and advice. It may be helpful for the State worker to leave comments on certain records read, giving commendation or pointing out weaknesses in procedures followed, or making suggestions as to future procedures. A general summary evaluating the case-work practices of the agency as a whole or, perhaps, of certain workers may be helpful. A conference with the staff of social case workers in an agency may be of special value after records have been read. Occasional visits to selected family homes used by agencies may place the State worker in a better position to be helpful about the problems of an agency.

Since the executive and staff usually have full schedules of work, the department should arrange a time convenient to an agency for making a visit. If the State worker expects to be given opportunity for discussion of problems confronting an agency, it is distinctly advantageous that visits be made by appointment. Otherwise the visit may disrupt the program of a busy day and the result will be an unprofitable time for the agency and the department. The probable lack of preparation of the executive and staff for discussion of problems on which they may seek advice is an added disadvantage in visiting without appointment. It is interesting to note that one State, where appointments for visits are now being made, reported a marked change in the attitude of the agencies toward visits by the department after this plan was put into operation.

The length of visits to agencies may be an hour or two, a half day, a whole day, or perhaps several days, depending upon the total plan of work with a particular agency and the immediate purpose of a single visit. Brief friendly calls, without appointment, may promote better understanding, but it should be recognized that while frequent visits of short duration may be useful in some instances, visits provid-

ing sufficient time to create a feeling of ease and opportunity for discussion are necessary. If the State worker constantly appears hurried and eager to terminate a visit at the earliest possible moment, the workers of an agency will be deterred from seeking advice and suggestions, and there will be little opportunity for obtaining a real understanding of the problems of an agency and for making suggestions about them. Arranging a visit at a time when the executive, staff, and children are relaxed and at ease is often helpful in furnishing a better picture of an agency program and also in stimulating mutual understanding between an agency and the department. Eating a meal, spending an evening, staying overnight, or living several days in an institution, if convenient, is often desirable.

An interesting illustration of the importance of human relationship in the supervisory process was given by one State worker who accepted an invitation to lunch after a somewhat discouraging and unproductive morning spent with the executive of an institution which she was visiting for the first time. At the close of the lunch the executive asked her to speak to the children and introduced her as a State inspector who had come to check up on them. Under the handicap of this introduction, she told an amusing story which drew a laugh, not only from the children but from the staff as well. This small incident seemed to break the barrier erected by apprehension and lack of understanding of the supervisory program. As the State worker said, she was regarded for the first time by the executive and staff not as a State inspector but as a human being with an interest in children identical with their own. As a result, a profitable afternoon was spent in conference with the executive and some of the staff discussing problems on which they sought advice.

All visits should terminate on a pleasant note and the way should be left open for returning. Although the State worker may have discussed the strengths and weaknesses of an agency program and given suggestions for improvements during a visit, it is often helpful to put in writing general comments on the adequacies and weaknesses of the agency program. Written comments are often useful to the executive and board members in their efforts to gain a perspective of their own work and in planning its future development.

Substitution of small group conferences of agency representatives for visits has some interesting possibilities. When the department has become acquainted with the agencies and knows that they are giving care in accordance with reasonable standards of work, group conferences of representatives of agencies in an urban community may be sponsored. The time which the department would spend working with one agency may be used to advantage by this plan, which would reach a number of agencies at one time. There is the added advantage of the stimulation which comes from a group discussion in which there is an exchange of ideas between persons engaged in the same type of work. Opportunity for keeping in touch with progress in the agencies is given to some extent, since the discussions may be based on practical problems dealt with in the agencies. The group meetings may be supplemented by visits when need for visiting is indicated.

Services to the governing boards.

Since the governing board as the administrative authority should be acquainted with any program which affects an agency, the State welfare department should interpret to the board the significance of State supervision and should explain the nature of services to be offered the particular agency. Without an understanding of the objectives of State supervision, the board members may resent any efforts of the State department to work with the agency. By consultation with individual board members, as well as informal discussions with the board as a group, the State department will stimulate the cooperation of the agency in the State program.

In view of the general interest of board members in child-welfare problems, a discussion of trends in the development of programs for children throughout the country may be helpful. Knowledge of the increased provisions for public services to children which have been made in recent years may be of particular interest to the board and will be useful in giving them a perspective of the agency program. Members of a board would also want to know about the adequacy of resources for children in the particular locality. A discussion of the methods and accomplishments of other agencies engaged in similar work may suggest to board members possibilities for improvement in their own agency.

The contribution which the boards of different agencies can make to each other was demonstrated in a State recently visited. As a result of a plan stimulated by the State welfare department, the board of an institution which had modernized its program invited the board of a nearby institution contemplating a change in its program to come to tea at the institution. Opportunity was afforded the visiting board to observe the improved program in operation and to discuss the methods followed in making changes. The encouragement of seeing results in a similar institution contributed to a renewed interest and determination of the visiting board to modify its program.

When requested, the State department may be helpful to the board in locating properly qualified persons for such positions as executive, supervisor, case worker, or matron when such positions are vacant. Often the department has associations with groups and organizations through which suggestions may come and be passed on to the board of an agency.

Although improvement in services may be expected from the efforts of a qualified executive and staff the authority to make changes in an agency rests ultimately with the board. It is, therefore, desirable for the representative of the State department to interview the president or chairman of the board as often as necessary. Occasionally a meeting with the board to discuss needed changes and to suggest improvements should be held. By attending a board meeting it is possible to interpret the suggested changes and to gain some idea of whether the changes can be made. After a meeting with the board in which the needs of an agency have been discussed it is wise to submit a written report of the recommendations made.

An obvious feature of the work of the State department with the board is constant cooperation with the executive through whom work with the board should be undertaken. Any official reports to the agency should be sent to the executive and a copy to the chairman of the board. In some instances the procedure may be reversed, the State department addressing the chairman directly and sending a copy to the executive.

Services to the staff.

The nature of services which the State welfare department should undertake with the staffs of agencies is primarily educational. The need for such services is illustrated by the improved quality of care to children that results when a staff are informed on modern methods of handling problems with which they are concerned. The services to the staff may include advice in regard to problems of immediate concern or may include consultation on programs of staff education.

Discussion with matrons, case workers, and other staff members of the problems of particular children may be helpful. This may be done in individual interviews or staff meetings, which may be held occasionally at the time of visits to the agencies. Opportunity is given in such situations to present new ideas of child care and to suggest material for reading and study. Provision may sometimes be made for discussion of general child-welfare problems which may be valuable in promoting better understanding of children.

In view of the need for well-qualified staff in the agencies, the State welfare department should stimulate the development of in-service training programs as a means of improving the performance of personnel. Assistance may be given in arranging a series of staff meetings in which an organized course of study is given. As a training process, planned meetings held at regular intervals with continuity in discussions offer distinct advantages. Although it may not be possible for a State worker to participate in the in-service training projects, attendance at an occasional meeting may be stimulating and encouraging.

The competence of personnel may be promoted if data on child-welfare problems are made available for the staff to read and study individually or as a group. The State department may assist by making published material available and by referring agency workers to resources through which they may have access to books on children's problems or may purchase them at a nominal cost. In some States the State department has a social-work library which may be used by personnel of agencies with which the department is working in its supervisory program. In a State where there are few resources, the department may encourage the organization of a small library which may travel from agency to agency. Monthly bulletins published by the department may be utilized for short articles on problems of children.

The department should assist in efforts to broaden the understanding of foster parents who, because of their responsibility in caring for children in foster homes, are in reality members of the staff. Foster-parent education may be promoted through meetings held occasionally or at regular intervals. Service in planning meetings

for the foster parents of a single agency or of a number of cooperating agencies in the same community may be given by the State welfare department.

Special services.

In order to provide adequate care for children, it is essential that child-welfare agencies have expert advice on such problems as nutrition, recreation, and mental hygiene. One of the significant contributions that can be made by the State department to agencies unable to obtain these essential services is to make consultation service available through other State agencies providing consultation or services in these fields or through its own staff or personnel lent by other public or private agencies.

The services of a nutritionist working directly with the person in charge of planning meals for an institution may result in marked improvement in the quality of the food and the health of the children. In one State visited recently a Negro home economist of the United States Extension Service spent a week in an institution for Negro children, assisting in planning meals and advising on household management. Material on diets and menus may be assembled by the State welfare department in consultation with specialists in the field and made available to institutions.

The value of a constructive recreation program in an institution cannot be overemphasized. The State department can do much to stimulate the use of local recreation leaders, who often will give voluntary service, to develop a sound recreation program in an institution or to give suggestions as to the best use of the existing resources for play or other forms of recreation. When such services are not available, arrangements may often be made for temporary loan to the department of a recreation specialist to assist a number of institutions and to advise child-placing agencies as to recreational needs of children in foster homes.

Lack of resources for the psychological and psychiatric study of children under the care of agencies is a serious problem in many States. The State department can be helpful in furthering understanding of the need for these services and in encouraging the use of local and State mental-hygiene resources. In some States service has been given to a few agencies by the psychologist or psychiatrist employed for child-welfare services under the Federal-State plans authorized by the Social Security Act.

In order to develop case-work procedures of agencies, the State department may need to provide special services in this field. A study of children under the care of an agency or a demonstration of intake services or home finding may sometimes be made by the State department, through its own staff or with the assistance of a county child-welfare worker, as a means of promoting an understanding of social case work and of revealing to an agency its needs for social service. Although social services are desirable in all institutions, it is recognized that it is not possible to provide for a social worker in every institution. Cooperation between local social-service agencies, public and private, and institutions having no case worker should be encouraged by the State department.

Group meetings.

The advantages of group meetings as a means of promoting better standards of care make it desirable to utilize a group approach in addition to the individual approach to the agencies. The contribution of meetings in giving an impetus to improved standards and in stimulating better care cannot be duplicated by the State welfare department's services to individual agencies.

Conferring and sharing of experiences by agencies may be conducive to growth and breadth in understanding, which will eventually be reflected in the services to children. Meetings of staff and board members of different agencies give opportunity for capitalizing upon the knowledge and experience of the individual agencies and make it possible for the stronger agencies to be of assistance to the weaker ones. Holding such meetings, when convenient, at an institution or in the office of a child-placing agency makes it possible to observe personally the facilities and methods in operation. An additional advantage is found in the stimulation of pride and interest on the part of the staff and board members of the agency acting as host.

Meetings may be an instrument through which the State department can obtain concerted action of all the agencies for improvement in standards of work. Discussion of licensing procedures, standards of service, the value of visits to individual agencies, and other important aspects of the supervisory program may be a feature of meetings with representatives of the agencies. An organized course of study in the form of an institute may be given to the agencies meeting as a group. Another advantage of meetings is the opportunity for the agencies as a group to hear outstanding persons in the child-welfare field, a privilege that individual agencies can rarely have.

Group meetings may be held under different auspices. The State department may cooperate with existing organizations which offer a forum for discussion of problems with which child-welfare agencies are concerned. The State conference of social work is an organization through which special meetings on child-welfare problems may be arranged for the workers in children's agencies. Committees planning the program for the annual meeting of the conference may welcome suggestions for meetings from the agencies or the State department. Often it is possible to arrange a series of meetings for a particular group of workers, such as house mothers or case workers, preceding the meeting of the State conference of social work. The council of social agencies in the larger cities is another medium through which agencies may meet for joint consideration of mutual problems. Since the agencies participating in meetings held under the auspices of a council of social agencies are located near one another, opportunity is available for meeting at frequent intervals, which has distinct advantages.

A second method by which agencies may be brought together is the arrangement of special meetings by the State department. A day's meeting to which agencies are invited may be held at intervals, either in a central place in the State or in several centers. Meetings may extend several days and may take the form of an institute for which trained leadership is provided by the State welfare department. The State department will find it beneficial to seek assistance

from the agencies in planning the program for these meetings. In order to maintain the spirit of helpfulness in the meetings arranged by the State department, it is preferable that there be no compulsion about attending. However, it is desirable that the agencies understand that distinct benefits are to be derived from the meetings and also that they will be welcomed.

A third process by which agencies may jointly participate in a program contributing to improved services to children throughout the State is a permanent organization of the agencies themselves. In some States the agency group has been formally organized with a constitution and bylaws, which provide for membership on an agency or individual basis. The organization may include only staff members or both staff and board members of child-welfare agencies. Since there are problems peculiar to institutional care, there may be a separate section for representatives of institutions. Officers selected by an approved procedure assume responsibility for directing the activities of the organization, which may hold quarterly or semiannual meetings, one of which may be held at the time of the State conference of social work. A membership or registration fee is a means of obtaining a small sum for the operation of the organization.

The role of the department in an organization of the agencies is interesting and important. Often the department, realizing that progress in obtaining better standards must come through the efforts of the agencies themselves, has promoted and encouraged a formal organization of agencies. The organized group offers a means by which the State department can truly make State supervision a cooperative program with the agencies. In some States a State worker serves on the executive committee of the organization and offers whatever assistance may be needed. Often the State department may provide clerical service needed in carrying on the work of the organization. In some instances the State department has been able to pay for special speakers for the meetings of the organization. Although the importance of the State welfare department as a part of the organization of agencies cannot be minimized, its role should be only advisory.

A conference, the purpose of which is to formulate general principles of child care or to plan for a survey of needs in the children's field, is also a means of promoting interagency thinking and action in the interest of better services. A conference organized for the time required to accomplish a particular project, such as the formulation of standards of care for children, offers excellent opportunities for the stimulation of thought and for education as to needs and desirable goals. Special committees formed as a part of the organization to work on various aspects of a problem temporarily bring together small groups of persons through which understanding may be broadened. An additional advantage of a temporary conference is found in the written reports of the work of the group, which may be useful in extending knowledge throughout the State and in focusing attention upon outstanding needs.

STANDARDS OF CARE AND SERVICE

An important aspect of State services to agencies is to make available to them in printed or mimeographed form the best information

on the essentials of child care, the services that should be available for children, and the procedures and programs that will make the best contribution to sound development of children needing care in foster homes or institutions. Standards of child care published by national organizations or by local or State groups in other States are valuable as a means through which agencies may become acquainted with the standards considered essential by recognized authorities in the field of child care or by agencies in other places. Such material can serve as the basis for discussion of attainable as well as desirable standards of care and may lead to the formulation of standards representing the best thinking in the State and the objectives toward which the agencies should be working.

Recognized standards of equipment, services, and procedures are of great value to individual agencies. With such standards at hand, an agency is able to evaluate its own work and to set goals toward which improvements may be directed. Another advantage is their use as a guide in formulating policies and in making changes in the type of service given.

In many States legislation relating to the supervision of child-welfare agencies specifies that the State agency must prescribe rules and regulations or establish standards of care and services to which agencies must conform. The procedure used in the formulation of such requirements and their content are of vital concern to both the State department and the agencies. Although the phrase "prescribed rules and regulations" has a more authoritative connotation than the phrase "established standards of care," this should not affect the use of sound procedure in the formulation of standards essential to adequate care of children. The formulation of standards should be a project participated in by both the agencies and the State department, since standards imposed by a State agency are never so effective as those that the agencies subscribe to and impose upon themselves.

There are many aspects of child care and services that must be considered in formulating standards. Some of these may be applicable only to institutional care and others only to foster-home care, but there are other general standards, such as conditions affecting the health of children and health services, that are common to both forms of care. The participation of the State health department in establishing standards of this aspect of care is of the greatest value in increasing knowledge of health resources and health problems that need consideration.

Proposed standards for consideration by the agencies and the State department may be formulated by committees of agency representatives appointed at agency meetings or by the State department after consultation with groups of agencies. Study of such proposed standards by each agency and in group meetings will insure understanding of their meaning and may also lead to a more comprehensive or more detailed formulation of the standards agreed upon in a final conference. It is evident that the establishment of standards of child care and service is not a first step in a supervisory program but rather the culmination of an educational program to strengthen the work of the agencies and to enlist their interest in safeguarding the care of children throughout the State. If the procedure of formulating standards is unhurried and extends over a period of a year or

more, there may be additional benefits to be realized by the longer time available for assimilation of the discussion.

There may be great variation in the financial resources, quality of personnel, and standards of care of the agencies within a State. It is, therefore, the responsibility of the State department to use every possible constructive measure and procedure to narrow the gap that exists between the standards of the best-qualified agencies and those that represent the maximum attainment of the weakest agencies. During the time when standards of care are being developed, situations may arise which make it necessary for the State department to require certain procedures that are essential for the health and social welfare of children. When this is necessary, the department should make available any special services needed to make the changes possible.

THE USE OF A LICENSE

The number of States in which every agency must receive a license from the State welfare department is steadily increasing. There are some variations in these States, however, in the significance given to the licensing process and in the methods of using a license. When every agency must be licensed, a license represents approval of the continued operation of an agency but may not always represent approval of all the features of its program. Acceptance of this general principle meets the objection that a license automatically represents approval of the work of an agency. The experience of several States seems to indicate, however, that there are definite advantages in some of the methods used for differentiation in licenses.

For those child-welfare agencies whose standards of care and service are questionable, the use of a tentative or provisional license may be desirable. Although such a license may not be authorized by legislation, the State department may inaugurate its use as an administrative measure. The issuance of provisional licenses to agencies whose continued operation cannot be fully approved prevents the existence of unlicensed agencies or their immediate closing without opportunity to improve their work. A provisional license may be a stimulus to agencies to qualify for a full license. To make the use of a provisional license effective, a time limit of a year or more should be set during which an agency may operate under such a license.

The use of licenses that designate the types of work the agencies are equipped to undertake and the number of children that they can care for adequately is steadily increasing. Such licenses indicate whether an agency is to operate an institution, to place children in family homes, or to engage in both types of service. Placement of children in family homes is a highly specialized service, requiring quite different techniques and procedures from those used in institutional care; and lack of qualified personnel in institutions to undertake this service has constituted a serious problem in the past. Further differentiation is made in some States in the license issued to child-placing agencies. In order to protect children permanently separated from their families, only agencies having a satisfactory program and a well-equipped staff are authorized to accept permanent guardianship of children or to place children in homes for

adoption. As a means of reaching a thorough understanding with an agency as to the type of work to be undertaken and indicated in the license, the State department should discuss the matter and reach an agreement with the agency before issuing the license.

The licenses in many States also specify the number of children of different ages and sex agreed upon by the agency and the department as the maximum for whom care should be undertaken. In determining the number of children who can be cared for adequately by an agency, consideration should be given to such factors as the capacity of the agency, the size and quality of the staff, the budget, and the availability of special services such as medical and dental care, recreational resources, and facilities for meeting particular needs of children. Better standards of care will be promoted by limiting an agency's service to the number of children whom it can serve well, thus emphasizing quality rather than quantity of service. Overcrowding in institutions will be eliminated and general improvement in the care of children will be made. While it should be recognized that the immediate reduction of the population of an agency may not be possible or practicable, the department from year to year, in conference with the executives and board members of an agency, may encourage reduction in the number of children accepted, with consequent improvement in the care given.

Annual licenses may be issued to all the agencies on a particular date or they may be issued at different times throughout the year. When licenses for all the agencies fall due on a certain date, it is likely that less time will be available for the careful consideration of each agency that is desirable. By licensing a few agencies each month it may be possible to give more detailed consideration to the individual agencies. However, either plan may be used satisfactorily. Placing upon the agencies responsibility for initiative in obtaining a license by making formal application is a sound practice. In submitting an application for a license, the board of an agency must review various aspects of its services in order to determine for what type of work a license is desired. Making application for a license affords opportunity to the board for consideration of the supervision program and its significance to the agencies.

Refusal of a license to an agency should never be characterized by procedures of a punitive nature. It is preferable always to notify an agency of its failure to qualify for a license well in advance of the time when a license is due. If this is done it may be possible to make changes which will qualify the agency for a license. Special assistance may be given in order to improve the work of an agency before the time of licensing. Since there are no positive gains to be realized when a license is withheld and the agency continues to operate, a definite understanding should be reached with the governing board several months before a license is due to the effect that improvements are to be made or the agency will be closed.

SUPERVISION OF CARE GIVEN IN FOSTER HOMES

There is great variation in statutory provisions of the States regarding the extent of responsibility given to State welfare departments for the supervision of care given to children in foster homes. Since the method of caring for children used by child-placing agencies is placement in foster homes, the supervision of such agencies by the State department indirectly involves supervision of care given in the homes used by the agency, regardless of whether these are adoptive homes or other free homes, boarding homes, or wage homes. Some of the measures of the quality of the work of a child-placing agency are the quality of the homes selected, the extent and quality of the service given in supervisory visits, and the character of the educational activities conducted to develop the potentialities of the foster home. Through placing emphasis on the policies, standards, and procedures of the agencies, the State department can do much to improve the care given in foster homes.

It may be assumed that every State having legislation that authorizes the supervision of child-placing agencies has thereby made provision for safeguarding the children receiving care in foster homes used by agencies.

LICENSING OF FAMILY HOMES

Legislation authorizing licensing, certification of, or granting permits to foster homes has been enacted in about two-thirds of the States. Such legislation is infinitely varied as it may apply to all types of family homes, to boarding homes only, or only to homes caring for infants. Furthermore, in some States a license may not be necessary for a home caring for one child and in others it is not required for homes caring for a child older than a specified age. The major requirement of all of this legislation is that the home must be investigated and a license or some other form of permit must be issued.

The basis of the enactment of many of these laws was concern for the welfare of children casually placed for board in undesirable, unsupervised homes, and at present most of the legislation applies only to boarding homes. With the use of boarding homes by child-placing agencies, the licensing of such homes cuts across the supervisory program for child-placing agencies, with the result that, although the State department is concerned with improving all agency foster-home placements, it has special responsibility for reviewing in detail and approving only one type of home. In order to simplify this procedure, various plans have been developed in different States, including authorizing the agencies to issue their own licenses or permits, issuing the licenses on recommendation of the agencies, and exempting the homes of approved agencies from the law.

When all types of agency foster homes must receive a license or permit, the licensing procedure is more consistent, but unless some plan is made for delegating some responsibility to the agencies, the State department is faced with the large administrative responsibility of reviewing the qualifications of every foster home used in the State. It is interesting to note that several States that have been given this broad responsibility have limited licensing to boarding homes.

The value or necessity of licensing foster homes used by agencies is a question which needs careful consideration. Many problems must be taken into consideration, and foremost among these is the relationship of the State department to the agencies. Detailed consideration of each placement made by an agency at a long distance may lead to misunderstanding and friction, because the report of the home submitted by the agency may not indicate some of the most significant reasons for its selection. The time given to straightening out minor difficulties may be far more profitably spent in a careful review of a few placements, including a visit to some homes followed by a case conference with the staff of the agency.

Consideration should also be given to the value and significance of a license to the foster parents. Some foster parents working with agencies may take pride in receiving an official approval of their home, whereas others may feel their prestige increased by not being required to have a license which other homes not receiving children from an authorized agency must have.

When the placement program of an agency is obviously inadequate, licensing of the homes in which children are placed is a limited form of protection. Assistance given in finding more adequate personnel, a short-time demonstration in home finding or other types of educational service are far more effective. During the last few years there has been a marked increase in the number of local welfare departments that are placing children in foster homes as part of their services. Because of the lack of qualified child-welfare workers in many of these departments, a number of States have made the requirement that all the foster homes used must be approved or licensed. This is a desirable procedure in the early development of local public departments, but as the quality of the service given improves there is no reason why the placements of local public child-welfare agencies should not be dealt with as those of private agencies are.

The major purpose of licensing foster homes is to provide a means of protection for children living in foster homes that are not under the supervision of an agency. Although the earliest attempt to meet this need was directed toward the protection of children placed in so-called baby farms or commercial boarding homes, there is growing realization that children casually placed in adoptive homes or other free homes are especially in need of protection. A child so placed does not have the continuing interest of parents or relatives, whereas a child receiving care on a boarding basis has the one who is responsible for paying the board to maintain an interest in his well-being.

There are limitations to the usefulness of a licensing requirement in these free-home placements. Such placements often do not come

to light or become known only after the child has been in the home over a period of time that limits the action which might be made in the interest of the child. But when such placements are known the authority given by the law to make an investigation and to visit the home when this seems desirable offers an opportunity to further the welfare of the child.

PROBLEMS OF INDEPENDENT PLACEMENTS

Protection for children received into homes independently of a social agency is especially needed because of conditions inherent in such placements. In the first place, the independent home is selected, not by a professionally qualified person with knowledge of the qualities which should characterize a desirable foster home but by a parent, relative, or other person, who may have been under great pressure to find a home for a child within a short time. A home selected in such a way may have little to contribute to the social and emotional development of children and may be wholly unsuitable for meeting the needs of a particular child. As a result, serious problems affecting the social and physical well-being of children result. Some of those problems are unsatisfactory foster-parent relationships, exploitation of children, and inadequate physical care, including improper food, insufficient clothing, and poor health care. Also, when there is no supervision of a child's own family situation many problems pertaining to relationship with his own family may arise. The parents may fail to pay board or may even abandon the child. Strong emotional attachments between a child and foster parents may be developed, resulting in disturbing experiences for the child when he returns to his own family.

Many unsatisfactory situations in independent family homes may be corrected and better standards promoted by services given through the process of licensing. Valuable as this may be, it does not make possible the correction of many of the undesirable situations which develop before the placement becomes known. Licensing of an unsatisfactory home may often be considered preferable to uprooting a child from an environment in which he has lived for several years and which has come to have some positive values for him.

Since this type of situation frequently exists, it is apparent that efforts should be made to prevent as many independent placements as possible by making agency services available for children who otherwise would be placed independently. The development of adequate community services for unmarried mothers may be a means of reducing the number of independent placements. When the services of an agency are available to an unmarried mother, assistance will be given in placing her child in a wisely selected foster home if placement is desirable, or plans other than placement may be worked out. Services for parents financially able to pay for their children's care in a family home are also important. Promoting the extension of agency services in a community to all who need them will keep at a minimum the number of independent placements.

As a preventive measure, also, it is important to work out a cooperative relationship with the newspapers, which may publish advertisements of parents desiring to place their children or of persons

desiring to locate children for whom to care. If the significance of the problem is known, the newspapers are usually willing to cooperate by referring persons who wish to advertise to a public or private child-welfare agency.

The county welfare departments responsible for services in local communities should have definite responsibility for the independent homes. The nearness of the county departments to the homes places them in a position to give more effective service than would be possible from the State welfare department. Although the State department should retain the right to issue a license, the assistance of the county welfare department should be given in making investigations, recommending the issuance or refusal of a license, and supervising the home after a license has been issued. Case-work services to promote a more satisfactory adjustment of children or to return them to their own families can be given by the county welfare department to children in independent homes. When it is necessary to undertake the removal of a child from an undesirable home by court action, the county welfare department is in a position to initiate such action. Consultation service from the State department in handling problems pertaining to the independent home should be available to the county welfare departments at all times.

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